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## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

18 September 1986

North Korea's Foreign Policy Goals

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Summary

North Korean President Kim Il-song continues to pursue his principal policy goal--reunification of the peninsula under Communist control--with a range of tactics that combine offers of dialogue with Seoul, aggressive attempts to intimidate the South through acts of violence, and a steady strengthening of military power. In the international arena, the North categorically opposes initiatives that would confer legitimacy on South Korea, as well as actively courts Third World support for its own national reunification program and other proposals such as its continuing demand to cohost the 1988 Olympics. P'yongyang has made withdrawal of US troops from South Korea a central objective and probably hopes recent efforts to open direct contacts at Panmunjom will steer Washington toward that end. In dealing with China and the Soviet Union, the North has turned toward Moscow, as well as benefited from renewed Soviet military aid. In

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our view, the shift reflects both unhappiness with China's inability to help the North offset Seoul's access to modern US military equipment and improve its economy as well as the growing economic relationship between China and South Korea. [ ]

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### P'yongyang's Narrow Focus

We believe North Korea's view of the outside world is shaped almost solely by its struggle with the South. P'yongyang's policies clearly aim at undercutting South Korea's effort to legitimize its status--and implicitly the division of the peninsula--and at undermining the security guarantee represented by the US-South Korea military relationship. P'yongyang has used a carrot-and-stick approach. On the one hand, its powerful military establishment and its use of violence against Seoul show it is a continuing threat. On the other hand, the North has used major diplomatic campaigns--in the early 1970s and again since 1984--to promote its peace diplomacy, to influence South Korean opinion, and to open contacts with the United States, the main objective in our view of the now suspended North-South dialogue. [ ]

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The North has made little headway in attracting international support for its struggle against the South, and political and economic trends are running against it. South Korea's economic growth contrasts markedly with the North's stagnation. The award of the 1988 Olympic Games to Seoul is a symbolic political setback for P'yongyang, which remains determined to try to share the limelight of the event. We suspect the North is pessimistic about the results of its ongoing effort to open talks with the United States on curtailing military exercises. [ ]

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### Relations with Moscow and Beijing

The most significant changes evident in North Korea's international position have occurred in its relations with China and the Soviet Union. Since Kim Il-song's visit to Moscow in May 1984, the North has edged closer to the Soviet Union. We believe P'yongyang is largely motivated by a need for newer weapons to counter South Korea's growing qualitative advantage in aircraft and other advanced systems, although military needs alone do not adequately explain the shift. In our view, P'yongyang also is unhappy with the growing economic relationship between China and South Korea and with the improvement in Sino-US relations that essentially has brought no payoff for its own objectives vis-a-vis the United States. For their part, the Chinese have downplayed the significance of the warming North Korean-Soviet ties, despite ample evidence that suggests Kim Il-song has now given Moscow the pride of place previously accorded Beijing in P'yongyang's strategic triangle. [ ]

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The improved Soviet-North Korean relationship has helped the North significantly. Since 1985, Moscow has ended an 11-year hiatus in the delivery of new Soviet weapons systems by providing 46 MIG-23 fighters and several SAM-3 batteries to North Korea. In addition, the Soviets have agreed to provide the North with at least one nuclear reactor. In return, P'yongyang has permitted Soviet reconnaissance aircraft to overfly North Korea for intelligence collection against US, South Korean, and Chinese targets. The North also has given increasing support to Soviet security initiatives, including its position on strategic and intermediate-range arms reductions and the proposal for an Asian Security Conference. [ ]

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Nevertheless, bilateral differences remain:

- The Soviets clearly find the North's brand of dynastic socialism repugnant, and have not yet publicly recognized Kim Il-song's son, Kim Chong-il, as the elder Kim's successor.
- Moscow has given lip-service to P'yongyang's pitch to cohost the 1988 Olympic Games; the Soviets, however, have so far refused to support either the North's demands for more soccer and other events than offered by the International Olympic Committee or P'yongyang's calls for a boycott.
- On other issues, Kim Il-song continues to support his personal friend Prince Sihanouk's anti-Vietnamese struggle in Cambodia. He also remains lukewarm toward the regime in Afghanistan, and in general has sought to protect his nonaligned credentials by distancing himself from Moscow elsewhere in the Third World. [ ]

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### Looking Ahead

The next two years, in our view, are likely to test North Korea's willingness to achieve its goals through diplomacy rather than violence. In addition to the challenges facing P'yongyang from the South, the pressures generated by the North's own succession process--in our judgment a major unknown--could affect its choice of options, as well as the direction in its relations with the Soviet Union and China. [ ]

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